

2003
Annual Progress and Services Report
for the
Consolidated Child & Family Services Plan

Section 2

Values - Who We Are

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2.1 Vision Statement

Legal References

45 CFR 1357.15(g)

The Office of Community Services (OCS) envisions a child and family system designed for protection, safety and healthy development of children that offers a well-integrated, broad range of services. OCS provides skilled and knowledgeable workers delivering these services in a culturally sensitive manner and provides an efficient, sophisticated, supportive, and committed supervisory and administrative staff. All supervisory and administrative staff support, enhance, and monitor line staff performances, identify and capture needed resources, make available the tools and programs which support service provision, and hold every level of the system accountable for fulfilling the Agency mission and mandate.

This vision is an expression of shared identity, shared values, and is based on a shared mission. It serves as a cornerstone for decision making, a standard for measuring our work, and a guide for planning our future.

In a series of management workshops, Regional Administrators and State Office personnel identified core values and developed a statement to express a common identity among workers. These core values express what OCS believes to be of utmost importance when working with those within and outside the Agency. The statement declares who we are, and voices our collective desire in serving others. Our mission specifies the Agency's purpose and responsibility to Louisiana citizens. It conveys our focus and boundaries for service.

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2.2 Mission Statement

Legal Reference

La. R.S. 36:477 C

45 CFR 1357.15 (e)(2)

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The Office of Community Services shall provide for the public child welfare functions of the state, including but not limited to child protective services; making permanent plans for foster children and meeting their daily maintenance needs of food, shelter, clothing, necessary physical medical services, school supplies, and incidental personal needs; and adoption placement services for foster children freed for adoption.

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2.3 Core Values of the Office of Community Services

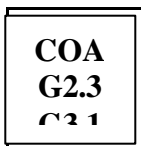
Values determine the perception of the world around you either as an agency or an individual. For individuals, values affect the choices they make, the career they pursue, and even the words they use. In short, values determine how an individual lives his or her life. These same concepts apply to an agency. Values can affect the way clients are treated, the services which are offered, staff morale, or the climate of an agency.

Conflict often arises when interaction occurs between individuals or groups whose values clash. It is important to have a proper understanding of differing value systems. It is even more important for an agency to have proper understanding of its own value system. An important aspect of one of the Agency's management retreats was to develop a statement of the Agency's core values. Through this process, the participants defined the essence of the OCS as "People committed to building a better future for those we serve".

In addition to identifying and defining the core values listed below, the OCS must evaluate its policies and practices to ensure that it is living its values.

CORE VALUES

Respect:	We treat others with dignity and courtesy.
Trust:	We interact with others in good faith.
Reliability:	We honor our commitments.
Honesty:	We are truthful, open and accountable in words and deeds.
Commitment:	We are loyal and dedicated to our mission.
Cooperative:	We develop and sustain partnerships and teamwork.
Flexibility:	We are open to change and new ideas.
Professionalism:	We approach our work with a body of knowledge, skills, values and ethics.



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2.4 Statement on Cultural Sensitivity

The Office of Community Services (OCS) is committed to addressing the cultural needs of the children and families served as well as the staff employed by the agency. OCS has worked on an ongoing basis to identify and address the cultural needs of staff and individuals served. Recently, community stakeholders and the state level Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) team of the agency have placed additional emphasis on the need to address cultural sensitivity. With the assistance of our community stakeholders, the agency has developed and adopted the following statement:

The Office of Community Services is committed to excellence in the development of a more culturally competent workplace. The agency refers to culture as a set of values, beliefs, and practices of a particular group or sub-group. Culture not only shapes personal/group values and attitudes, it also influences individual/familial beliefs, practices and behavior. Furthermore, culture may be a factor in influencing service outcomes. Staff is expected to demonstrate cultural awareness of populations served in order to minimize or avoid stereotypes and biases which may result in disparate treatment for members of minority groups. Thus, staff of the Office of Community Services are expected to refrain from standardization of a particular culture's beliefs and practices. Each person is to be treated as an individual.

OCS believes that cultural competence is a process rather than an outcome. Staff is committed to awareness of the impact of culture and ethnicity on an individual's or family's values, beliefs and responses to agency involvement. The agency is committed to developing a service delivery system which incorporates knowledge and skill with accurate assessment which recognizes culture-based beliefs regarding health, behavior, and child rearing practices. OCS and its' staff are committed to a service delivery system which offers service solutions that are respectful of cultural and ethnic factors and demonstrate an understanding of cultural and ethnic barriers.

Through commitment to cultural sensitivity, OCS seeks to provide the best possible services to the children and families served and to create a work environment where individual and cultural differences are acknowledged and respected.

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2.5 Philosophy in Providing Child and Family Services

Legal Reference

45 CFR 1357.15 (g)

- A. A fundamental purpose of public child welfare practice is the protection of children at risk of harm.
- B. The current philosophy of public child welfare practice is family-focused, child-centered services which require a conscious balancing of the family's "right to privacy" and "freedom from intrusion" with the child's right to protection from harm.
- C. A basic principle of public, child welfare practice today requires that every effort be made to help families become equipped in providing the necessary care where safety and protection of their children in their own home is possible.
- D. When families are unable, for whatever reason, to provide the basic care and safety needed for protection and development of their children, and the state must intervene, children should be assured of the necessary and proper care most appropriate for their individual needs.
- E. All children placed outside their own home need to be assured of a timely and appropriate plan and the efforts necessary to secure a permanent, stable, family setting.
- F. Public child welfare programs require knowledgeable, skilled, committed personnel who embrace the Children and Family Services Plan (CFSP) service principles and are willing to assume the tremendous responsibilities of working with the multiple issues involved with the families needing State intervention. This *level* of staff commitment demands the ability to make the professional judgments that assure the best interest of children being served and protect the rights of the parents.
- G. Administrators of public child welfare systems recognize the importance of the mandates placed upon the system by lawmakers and taxpayers to be accountable and effective in the management of public resources.
- H. The overriding purpose of public child welfare practice is the timely provision of family-focused, child-centered services designed to meet the needs of the family and child and, protect the rights and interests of both.

This basic philosophical perspective, which is based on the core values and agency mission statement, provides the conceptual foundation for how the Agency conducts itself in carrying out its mission and decision-making. These precepts are the standards against which the Agency judges the appropriateness of its actions and interactions.

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2.6 Principles of Child and Family Services

Legal Reference

45 CFR 1355.25

45 CFR 1357.15(p)

The overall agency philosophy and the following principles were used as guideposts in developing, operating, and improving the continuum of child and family services.

- A. The safety, permanency and well-being of children and of all family members is paramount. When safety can be assured, strengthening and preserving families is seen as the best way to promote the healthy development of children.
- B. Services are focused on the family as a whole; service providers work with families as partners in identifying and meeting individual and family needs; family strengths are identified, enhanced, respected, and mobilized to help families solve the problems which compromise their functioning and well-being.
- C. Services promote the healthy development of children and youth, promote permanency for all children and help prepare youth emancipating from the foster care system for self-sufficiently and independent living.
- D. Services may focus on prevention, protection, or other short or long-term interventions to meet the needs of the family and the best interests and needs of the individual(s) who may be placed in out-of-home care.
- E. Services are timely, flexible, coordinated, and accessible to families and individuals statewide. These services are principally delivered in the home or the community, and are delivered in a manner that is respectful of and builds on the strengths of the community and cultural groups.
- F. Services are organized as a continuum, designed to achieve measurable outcomes, and are linked to a wide variety of supports and services which can be crucial to meeting families' and children's needs, for example, housing, substance abuse treatment, mental health, domestic violence, health, education, job training, child care and informal support networks.
- G. Most child and family services are community-based, involve community organizations, parents and residents in their design and delivery, and are accountable to the community and the client's needs.
- H. Services are intensive enough and of sufficient duration to keep children safe and meet family needs. The actual level of intensity and length of time needed to ensure safety and

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assist the family may vary greatly between preventive (family support) and crisis intervention services (family preservation), based on the changing needs of children and families at various times in their lives. A family or an individual does not need to be in crisis in order to receive services.